Avon Grove Church OF THE NAZARENE

"Living out the mission of Jesus – together."

Sermon Discussion Guide
10/25/2026

Sermon: *"More Than A Message"*
Text: *1 Thessalonians 2:1-8 (Matthew 22:34-46)*

🌿 **Introduction:** Think about someone who has made a meaningful difference in your spiritual life. What did that person do that helped you grow in your relationship with Jesus?

1. Our Motives Matter - 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6

Why do you think the desire for recognition or appreciation can sometimes influence the way we serve others? Where might that show up in everyday life?

Think about your relationships at home, work, or church. How can the need to be appreciated or affirmed affect the way we respond when people don't recognize our efforts?

What would change in the way you serve and care for others if you were more concerned with pleasing God than receiving a response from people?

Personal reflection: Is there an area of your life where you find yourself becoming frustrated or discouraged because your efforts aren't being recognized?

2. Our Lives Should Reflect Jesus – 1 Thessalonians 2:7, Matthew 22:37-39

Jesus connects loving God with loving our neighbors. Our relationship with God should shape our relationships with others.

Think about the people you interact with most often. What characteristics of Jesus do you think they experience through you? Patience? Compassion? Grace? Forgiveness? Something else?

Which is more difficult for you: being patient with someone who continually makes mistakes, extending grace when someone disappoints you, or taking the first step toward reconciliation when there's tension? Why?

What is one specific relationship in which you could respond differently this week in order to reflect the character of Jesus?

Personal reflection: Is there someone who regularly experiences your frustration, impatience, or criticism more than your grace and encouragement?

3. Discipleship Happens in Relationship – 1 Thessalonians 2:8
Discipleship is more than simply passing along information.

What are some reasons we might hesitate to become personally invested in someone else's spiritual growth? Is it a lack of confidence, time, intentionality, or something else?

Consider the three practical steps:

- **Notice:** Who has God already placed around you who might need encouragement, friendship, or spiritual direction?
- **Move toward:** What would it look like to take the initiative and build a more intentional relationship with that person?
- **Walk alongside:** How could you help that person grow in their relationship with Jesus over time?

How might our understanding of making disciples change if we began seeing the everyday relationships God has given us as opportunities for discipleship rather than viewing discipleship primarily as something that happens through church programs?

Personal reflection: What is one simple way you could invest in someone else's spiritual growth without needing to have all the answers or be a spiritual expert?

4. The Why – Matthew 22:41-46
Because Jesus Is Lord

What's the difference between admiring Jesus and actually surrendering to Him as Lord? How does that difference affect our everyday decisions and relationships?

How does remembering that Jesus first gave Himself for us change the way we think about giving ourselves to other people?

Personal Response: One Person. One Step. This Week.

One person: Who is one person God has already placed in your life that might need your encouragement, attention, friendship, or spiritual investment?

One step: What is one intentional thing you can do this week to let that person experience the love of Jesus through you? It might be making a phone call, inviting someone to coffee, taking time to listen, offering to pray, initiating a difficult conversation, or intentionally following up with someone who is struggling.

One commitment: What will you actually do, and when will you take that first step?

🗣️ **Close in prayer:**

The gospel doesn't just give us a message to share. It gives us a life to offer.

Because Jesus gave Himself for us, we give ourselves to others.

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command."
John 15:12-14